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REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Note by the Secretary-General

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/218 B, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit, for the attention of the General Assembly, the attached reports, conveyed to him by the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, concerning programme and administrative practices in the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

2. In relation to two of these Commissions - ECE and ESCWA - as well as in relation to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Secretary-General has recently appointed new Executive Secretaries. These appointments are part of a broader effort to increase effectiveness and reinforce management in the economic and social sectors of the Organization, to enhance the responsiveness of the Commissions to national priorities and to adapt their contribution to the changing international context, at both the global and regional levels.

3. The Secretary-General has asked the Executive Secretaries to review carefully programme orientations and management structures and practices in their respective secretariats and to take action to eliminate duplication and reinforce collaboration with the specialized agencies and other regional organizations. His objective is to refocus and streamline the work of the Commissions to become centres of excellence in their respective regions, as well as catalysts for more coherent regional strategies and active forces for enhanced regional cooperation and integration.

4. The Secretary-General is also concerned about strengthening linkages between Commissions and departments and programmes in the economic and social sectors at Headquarters, so that opportunities that exist for regional approaches and solutions to development problems are fully exploited and regional capacities are mobilized in pursuing global development.

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ANNEX

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Letter of transmittal

The present document contains three reports on the programme and administrative practices in the secretariats of three United Nations regional commissions, namely, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Economic Commission for Europe.

These reports were initiated by the Office of Inspections and Investigations, the predecessor of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. They aimed at ascertaining whether the work programmes of the offices concerned were properly conceived, executed and evaluated. In the process, the majority of the outputs delivered in recent years were examined and the procedures set in place to ensure adequate implementation and control over the resources utilized were assessed.

The reports include a number of recommendations which, if implemented, would enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of programme implementation in the offices under consideration. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has complied fully with these recommendations. In the case of the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic Commission for Africa, implementation is proceeding. The follow-up action taken as of 31 March 1995 to address the recommendations made is summarized in the appendices to each of the reports.

The Office of Internal Oversight Services will keep the situation under review to ascertain compliance and to ensure that the objectives of the recommendations made have been fulfilled.

(Signed) Karl Th. PASCHKE
Under-Secretary-General
for Internal Oversight Services

I. REPORT ON THE PROGRAMME AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES OF THE SECRETARIAT OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Submitted by a team of the Office of Inspections and Investigations on 16 November 1993

A. Substance

1. Africa - and the entire globe - is experiencing fundamental economic and social change. Old ideas are now being discarded, and fresh new approaches experimented with, approaches which in many cases are distinctly African and take into account the diversity of the 52 countries of the region, but also their commonality of interests. Any future development path will more than likely include increased emphasis on inter-African trade. As other parts of the world form major trading blocks, Africa may well find that it is in its own best interest to reduce dependence on trade outside of the region while increasing trade within the region. This has implications for the future structure of African production and the use of its factor endowments. How this structure will unfold in the coming years will largely depend upon the basis laid today.

2. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is in a unique position to contribute to the definition of a new African development strategy. It has the mandate, the institutional framework, and experienced and highly qualified staff at the higher levels. However, if it is going to produce a strategy which will be accepted by the countries in the region as well as by donor countries outside the region, it will have to be a strategy that is coherent, comprehensive and credible. In this regard, stress has to be placed on the quality of the analysis that will underpin strategy formulation. Political decisions will then be grounded on a sound technical basis.

3. A lot of technical work indeed exists, but it is not yet aggregated into a comprehensive development strategy, that is, a macroeconomic framework superimposed on the many sectoral projects at the micro level which constitute the development process. We suggest that the required macroeconomic framework for testing developmental ideas can be provided by two of the substantive clusters, namely research and planning, on the one hand, and industry and human settlements, on the other. The macroeconomic framework could ideally encompass the design of as many econometric models as there are countries in the region, linking them (through trade patterns) with each other and with other major trading blocks. The African models developed at ECA could also be connected to the rest of the world through project LINK. It should be recalled that successful work along these lines has already been undertaken by ESCAP.

4. In this regard, we note that perhaps the most serious impediment to quality analysis in Africa is the lack of statistical data. Most important to ECA is data on trade among African countries; this data is virtually non-existent in ECA at present. Serious efforts must be made to remedy this gap. Renewed efforts should be made to encourage countries to reply to the United Nations trade questionnaires circulated by the Statistical Division at Headquarters. In case of difficulty, training should be provided to would-be respondents.

B. Quality

5. A significant feature of a regional commission is that its staff can obtain insights into development problems which would be difficult to observe, for example, from New York. The current location has, however, some disadvantages, and among the most important is professional isolation. In order for ECA to make a real intellectual contribution to the development process in Africa, the skills of many of the current staff will need to be upgraded. Two possible approaches towards this objective are, one, formal university training and, two, an in-house publication. As regards university training, in Addis Ababa or in other locations, we note that the training service has some provision for study leave, but not enough for all who need it. An alternative might be to use Addis Ababa University, which has classes only during ECA working hours; a flexible work schedule might well be introduced to solve this problem. As regards an in-house publication, we note that a staff paper series has already been initiated. We agree that this contributes to the promotion of serious professional thinking among the staff, provided a system exists for peer review and comment. (A similar staff paper series in New York is distributed to over 150 scholars and institutions for comment.) It might also be useful to have an even more academic ECA journal similar to the Journal of Development Planning at Headquarters; this would not only contribute to the enhancement of professionalism of the staff, but would make a statement about ECA's commitment to quality.

6. A related observation concerns horizontal communication. Division heads are generally of exceptional quality, and they convene in weekly meetings, but otherwise little horizontal communication appears to exist among ECA Professional staff. Putting together a development strategy for Africa is a multidisciplinary task requiring the integrated efforts of all divisions.

C. Programme oversight

7. The existing mechanism for programme oversight, at the levels of formulation, implementation and coordination, shows signs of weakness and of undue dispersal. There are three different centres of responsibility for programme oversight within ECA, namely the Economic Cooperation Office, the Technical Assistance Coordination and Operations Office and the Policy and Programme Coordination Office. All three units are attached to the Office of the Executive Secretary.

8. The Economic Cooperation Office oversees the programme of work of the five Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs), which in terms of expenditure accounts for approximately one quarter of the total programme of work of the Commission. But the programme of work of the MULPOCs is decided elsewhere, namely by the subregional intergovernmental organizations covering each of the five areas serviced by the MULPOCs. The programme of work of the MULPOCs, thus approved, is transmitted to the ECA Conference of Ministers through the secretariat of ECA, whose role in this regard appears to be merely to ensure that the activities proposed do not duplicate those programmed by the substantive divisions at Headquarters. Thus, the programme role of the Economic Cooperation Office - an office with nine Professional staff - in overseeing and

directing the activities of the MULPOCs is unclear; ECO appears rather to act as a liaison centre, channelling requests by MULPOCs for specific assistance which the central secretariat can provide in terms of technical studies or advisory services. Given the almost total independence of the programme of work of the MULPOCs vis-à-vis that of the central secretariat, there is no assurance that those requests can be smoothly integrated into the ongoing programme of the substantive divisions.

9. The Technical Assistance Coordination and Operations Office is another quasi-autonomous unit which oversees operational projects representing also, as a whole, a substantial part of the programme of work of ECA. All technical cooperation projects are overseen by the Office, and, as many of these projects are in support of the regular programme of work of ECA - and indeed are often an integral part of the programme - the influence of the Office on the core programme of ECA is considerable. The Technical Assistance Coordination and Operations Office also relates to the MULPOCs, since many operational projects are in support of the MULPOC programme.

10. The Policy and Programme Coordination Office directly oversees the remaining programme activities, namely, those which do not fall within the purview of the Economic Cooperation Office or the Technical Assistance Coordination and Operations Office. The Policy and Programme Coordination Office is also, and most importantly, responsible for the overall oversight of the programme of work of ECA at the programme formulation stage, as well as for monitoring the implementation and assessing the results of the self-evaluation exercise. However, bearing in mind the existence of two other quasi-independent oversight mechanisms, and the limited staffing resources of the Policy and Programme Coordination Office, the role of this Office appears to be rather limited, namely, to put together the activities proposed, ensuring that they do not overlap or duplicate; to consolidate the biannual reports submitted by programme managers; and to finalize the programme submission to the ECA Conference of Ministers.

D. The multinational programming and operations centres

11. Reference has already been made, in paragraphs 8 and 9 above, to the work of the MULPOCs. It should be recalled, in this regard, that regional integration efforts in Africa have led to the formation of a number of subregional economic groupings or intergovernmental organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC), the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL), the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern African States (PTA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Some of these, in turn, contain sub-organizations. For example, ECOWAS contains the West African Economic Community (CEAO), and the Mano River Union (MRU). Each of these organizations has its own secretariat and institutional structure, and out of each of them there emerges a list of developmental priorities of interest to the organization concerned. However, since these priorities are developed at the individual group level, the possibility always exists of conflicts of priorities or of interest within the African context. These conflicts may go undetected unless

there is a regional organization such as ECA which can assess them in the context of a developmental strategy for Africa as a whole.

E. Administration

12. The administrative, financial management and conference services of the Commission are carried out by the Division for Administration and Conference Services headed by a chief at the D-1 level and comprising the following sections: the Information Systems Section, the Personnel Section, the Budget and Finance Section, the Conference Services Section and the General Services Section.

13. A total of 386 posts/staff are assigned to the Division. The breakdown by category and source of financing is as follows:

	Professional	General Service	Total	Percentage of total
Regular Budget	48	250	298	77.2
Temporary assistance/regular budget	2	48	50	13.0
Extrabudgetary/overhead	1	37	38	9.8
Total	51	335	386	100.0

14. The administrative and financial management of the Commission were the subject of internal and external audit during the past two years. The audit reports identified a number of internal control weaknesses and administrative shortcomings. Notwithstanding the Administration's efforts to correct the shortcomings and initiate improvements, the inherent weaknesses in the various services unless corrected will continue to hamper progress. In our opinion, the main causes of these weaknesses have their origin in the following:

(a) Many Professional posts, particularly those of section chiefs, remained vacant for extended periods of time (some are still vacant). The problem was further aggravated by the fact that some of those selected to fill some of the vacant posts lacked the appropriate qualifications and relevant experience;

(b) Intermediary supervisory level staff is practically non-existent, thus hampering proper decentralization and delegation within sections;

(c) Inefficient and insufficient office automation, both hardware and software;

(d) Lack of adequate staff training and staff rotation.

15. In order to remedy the situation, immediate measures must be taken along the following lines:

(a) All vacant Professional posts, particularly those of the section chiefs must be filled immediately with adequately qualified and experienced staff;

(b) It was noted that most services in the Division appeared to be overstaffed at the General Service level. Therefore, it is recommended that a full review and inventory of the work undertaken by each section should be undertaken with a view to eliminating unnecessary processes and duplication of work and to determine: (i) whether what is being done should continue to be done; and (ii) whether it should be done elsewhere. This review would then lead to the establishment of optimal staffing patterns, and could be achieved through the assignment of an organization and management team to undertake such analysis;

(c) Appropriate staffing training programmes should be established and implemented to enhance capabilities of the staff in the various areas of administration, and in particular in the areas of finance, budget and personnel administration. Such training programmes should emphasize training in supervision and management practices;

(d) While the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) is expected to meet the needs of the Commission in a few years time, appropriate measures must still be taken immediately to enhance the Commission's capabilities in office automation and systems design, particularly in the areas of finance, budget and administration. Much of the hardware currently in use is antiquated and the systems in use, for example payroll, are obsolete;

(e) The current arrangements for ensuring accountability through limited audit missions from Headquarters do not appear to be sufficient. During the past two years two audits were carried out with a rather limited scope. The Commission could benefit from either more frequent audit visits from Headquarters or, more ideally, the assignment of resident auditors. This together with arrangements for subcontracting audit with a commercial firm may be desirable;

(f) Although the above five measures will no doubt help to solve, in the long term, many of the problems identified in this area, there is an urgent need to clear up existing backlog and ensure the adequacy of ongoing administrative procedures. This, in our view, calls for the urgent assignment to Addis Ababa of a "swat" team comprising perhaps four or five experienced staff members from Headquarters, at the junior Professional and senior General Service levels, for a three to four month period. The expense involved is likely to produce more than adequate return in terms of improvement of ongoing procedures and elimination of backlogs.

16. Within the field of administration, the team wishes to comment also on the issue of so-called "operational" activities. The programme budget of ECA for 1992-1993 makes frequent reference to those activities, namely activities provided at the direct request of a Government or Governments and funded either

by the regular programme of technical cooperation or from extrabudgetary funds. Out of a total of $23 million in extrabudgetary funds committed by ECA over the first 20 months of the current biennium, almost $21 million were spent on operational activities. However, on inquiry, the team determined that by far the larger part of "operational" activities were, in fact, activities closely related to the core work of ECA and would better be defined, in programme budget terms, as substantive activities. We believe that this matter should be clarified, since the current programme budget presentation provides a misleading picture of the true situation.

17. One final issue of administration that the team wishes to address is the important matter of financial control. As indicated in paragraph 16, extrabudgetary funds, including those allotted to so-called "operational" activities, are to a large extent used to strengthen the core programme of work of the secretariat. These funds are thus expended in a pattern closely following that of the regular budget; for example, for the first 20 months of the current biennium, expenditures of extrabudgetary funds included 73 per cent for staff costs and consultancies, 9.4 per cent for travel, etc. Evidence provided to the team indicated that, for the most part, staff paid from extrabudgetary funds sat side-by-side with those paid from regular budget funds, and that, also for the most part, they were used flexibly to contribute to the overall programme of work of their organizational unit. One would have expected that as a parallel procedure, the financial control of the extrabudgetary funds in question would have followed a pattern similar to that for the regular budget. This, however, is not the case. Regular budget allotments are prepared and distributed by the Division of Administration, whereas expenditure authorizations for project funds are issued by the Division for Technical Cooperation. Further, authority to spend from overhead accounts is vested in the ECA Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Matters. Granted that close cooperation may exist between these three authorization centres, the fact nevertheless remains that there is no central point where overall financial control is exercised over the totality of ECA expenditure. In the interest of strong and effective financial control, that central point should be instituted.

18. The team was happy to note a high degree of openness in staff-management relations. This is of particular importance at a time when, because of an almost certain reduction in extrabudgetary funds, careful and transparent procedures may need to be developed to deal with resulting staff attrition.

F. Conclusions and recommendations

19. The team is of the opinion that much useful work has been done at ECA, and that a considerable amount of candid introspection has taken place within the secretariat of the Commission. There is a focal point for combined programme and budget review - the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Matters - which can work as a valuable management instrument. The main question now is how to galvanize ECA towards its role as a leader in the African development process.

20. Within this framework, our principal observation is that there is a need for greater coherence at three levels, namely substance, programme and administration.

Substance

21. ECA is engaged in the formulation of a new development strategy for Africa, a strategy deriving from economic realities and political decisions by member States and necessarily based on much sound technical work by the secretariat. We believe that efforts to achieve a comprehensive development strategy will be enhanced by placing emphasis on an analysis of trade patterns of African countries with each other and with outside trading blocks. This analysis would be of considerable help as an input into the work of all ECA divisions, including proposed operational projects.

22. As already discussed, the quality of staff at the higher level is often impressive, but at other levels we are of the belief that quality could be improved through increased training and greater horizontal communication (including perhaps the publication of an in-house professional periodical).

Programme

23. As indicated in paragraphs 7 to 10 above, fragmentation appears to exist at the levels of programme formulation and programme management and control. This also is an impediment to correct resource determination and can lead to waste; it detracts from clear accountability and makes it harder to develop clear policies for the allocation of resources to address priorities. We recommend therefore that there should be a single oversight mechanism to programme and coordinate all ECA activities, irrespective of their source of funding. This oversight mechanism should have a direct influence in shaping the programme of work of the MULPOCs and in integrating it into the objectives and work plans of ECA as a whole.

24. As a consequence, the roles and function of the Economic Cooperation Office and the Technical Assistance Coordination and Operations Office should be redefined and their oversight functions integrated within the overall coordinating mechanism.

25. The monitoring of programme implementation should be perceived as a management tool of performance evaluation and not as a mere reporting mechanism. It is thus necessary to widen and accelerate present efforts towards self-evaluation in order to provide a continuous flow of information on results achieved, difficulties encountered and remedies proposed.

Administration

26. Three separate focal points exist for financial authorization, namely, the Division of Administration for the regular budget, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Matters for overhead and the Technical Assistance Coordination and Operations Office for operational funds. Expenditure control of all funds is indeed performed by the Division of Administration, but at a somewhat mechanical level. Since, as set out in paragraph 23 above, the work

programme of ECA might well be better integrated, we also recommend that the function of financial authorization for all funds be centralized in the Division of Administration. This is particularly important in view of the fact that many operational projects are really activities in support of the core ECA programme of work.

27. In addition to the issue of financial coherence, the team has three further recommendations concerning administrative matters. First, as indicated in paragraph 15 above, a determined effort needs to be made to upgrade the performance of the administrative function. This effort should include an organizational and management study and enhancement, through appropriate training, of the capacity of administrative staff. Secondly, Headquarters should provide urgent assistance to the Division of Administration, probably by way of a temporary detail to Addis Ababa - say three or four months - of a team of four or five knowledgeable staff at the junior Professional and senior General Service levels. Thirdly, there is a need to strengthen the audit function in ECA. This can be done by assigning to ECA one or two resident auditors, by more frequent visits from Headquarters audit or by concluding arrangements for subcontracting audit with an outside firm or outside firms.

APPENDIX I

Observations on specific substantive divisions of the Economic Commission for Africa

I. SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND PLANNING DIVISION

1. The work of this division is at the core of the entire mission of the Commission for two compelling reasons:

(a) It produces the Survey of Economic and Social Conditions in Africa, which is the most important publication of the Commission and consequently the yardstick by which the quality of the work of the Commission is most frequently judged by those outside the Commission;

(b) It is responsible for the socio-economic analysis of the development strategy alternatives. The tools for doing this are the responsibility of the Planning and Projections Section, in particular the socio-economic modelling exercise.

2. With regard to the Survey, there has been a marked quality improvement in recent issues as compared to the issues of the 1980s. However, the team has a few suggestions that might provide avenues for further improvement:

(a) Continue the good work on the data in the statistical annex, but more effort should be made to close the gap between the current year and the last year presented, especially for the national accounts;

(b) The first section, which deals with the international environment, could give more emphasis to the impact that the rest of the world has on Africa and the implications for African short-term policy;

(c) While statistics are presented, more analysis could be done with them. For example, the terms of trade are presented, but the net gains from the terms of trade are not. Other statistical derivatives that could be presented are marginal propensities, income elasticities and some explanation for their trends. Also, when imports fall, one would like to see how this might affect living standards and production. Finally, some effort should be made to show the per capita incomes of deciles (or some other quantiles) of the population, and not only the average per capita for a country or region. This could be done by using the summary income distribution tables found in the household sample surveys (for the countries that have them) and estimating the decile size distribution of income.

3. The modelling effort of the Planning and Projections Section has put a lot of emphasis on short-term forecasting using social accounts matrix (SAM) based models. This type of model is appealing because it provides a methodology for integrating income distribution and social expenditure into an economic model, thereby providing a more complete tool for policy analysis. The difficulty with this type of model is that building a SAM is data intensive, and most statistical offices are not yet equipped to collect the data series needed for a

SAM. Hence, it becomes a "labour of love" to build a SAM model, and can take as long as two years to finish one country. ECA has been working in this direction since the 1980s and has only completed eight models. At this rate it will be the year 2070 before a model is built for every country in Africa. Furthermore, SAM-based models are static unless a way can be found to change the SAM coefficients dynamically. In any case, by the time a SAM is completed for a country, it is out of date.

4. However, the importance of socio-economic models for evaluating development strategy alternatives is well known and is mentioned in several ECA publications. For strategy analysis, long-term macro models are more important than short-term forecasting models. They may be used in conjunction with a short-term model for crisis management and planning purposes, but as a tool for examining development alternatives, which are in themselves long-term phenomena, they can be extremely useful. They have the advantage of being less complicated to build, operate and modify. A system of 52 country models linked through trade with each other and their major trading partners outside of Africa would be ideal, because the projections could be aggregated into any subregional groupings desired. This would give ECA the ability to examine the implications of different development scenarios on different intergovernmental organizations and help unscramble the complicated effects that occur when intergovernmental organizations overlap. It should be noted that the World Bank has already developed such a system of models and ESCAP has done the same for its region.

II. JOINT ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA/FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOOD AND AGRICULTURE DIVISION

5. The team was impressed with the professionalism and high quality work performed in this Division. However, it would be desirable to see the work in the agricultural sector more fully integrated into the overall economy as viewed by the Commission. For example, because agriculture is one producing sector, it is a component of GDP. Any strategy analysis of this sector, whether at the country, subregional or regional level, must take into account what is happening in the other producing sectors and hence should be coordinated with the work in the Industry and Human Settlements Division as well as the Socio-economic Research and Planning Division. Likewise, questions of food security must be weighed in light of other consumption alternatives such as health or housing security. Also, water resource research should be coordinated with agricultural research. Any sector strategies that emerge should be pieced together to form an overall ECA development strategy.

III. INDUSTRY AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS DIVISION

6. What was suggested for the Food and Agriculture Division is also suggested for the Industry and Human Settlements Division, that is, the work in this Division should be performed in an interdisciplinary mode with all the other substantive divisions. Division chiefs and their staffs would benefit from the discussion of developmental objectives, brainstorming of ideas and the sharing of technical knowledge. All divisions that are using GDP projections for

scenario analysis in their sector should use the same set produced by the Social Policy, Planning and Research Unit which should be agreed upon by all division chiefs. The team stresses this point because it noticed that in two consultant reports, both of high quality but in different sectors, two different sets of GDP projections were used for analysing the strategy in their respective sectors. One report used GDP projections for Africa made at United Nations Headquarters which had some special assumptions built in that might not have been appropriate for the purposes of that sector. The other consultant made his own projection. It is this kind of inconsistency that should be avoided.

IV. STATISTICS DIVISION

7. The team noted that the statistical work on national accounts was progressing well, but that there was a real lack of intra-African trade data broken down by the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC). This data is very important for African regional integration strategies. The team has read the ECA paper on the estimating techniques used to fill in this data when they are not reported, but feels that the current techniques such as TESSY and non-linear programming techniques being developed at the World Bank should only be used when reported data have been exhausted. The reason for this is that these techniques can only insert plausible estimates of the missing data, and since there are many sets of plausible estimates, the numbers produced may be far from reality. If the Statistics Division could make a priority of obtaining this data by encouraging countries to process their trade data more efficiently, it would be making a great contribution to the region.

V. MULTIDISCIPLINARY REGIONAL ADVISORY GROUP

8. The papers presented by this Group were also very impressive and should be more widely distributed because they reflect a very positive image of ECA. On the other hand, the team felt that this Group should also weave its work into the mainstream of thinking at ECA and contribute to the formulation of an ECA development strategy.

VI. OTHER SUBSTANTIVE DIVISIONS

9. The advice offered to the Food and Agriculture Division and the Industry and Human Settlements Division is also offered to the other substantive divisions, namely that they should make every effort to work in an interdisciplinary mode and to take into account all the linkages of their sector with all other sectors. This is true of the social as well as the economic sectors. The team has noticed that the social sectors have been splintered into the Social Policy, Planning and Research Unit, the Social Development Section, the Human Resources Development Section and the African Training and Research Centre for Women. Much of the discussion in the papers of the Human Resource Development Section deals with appropriate education and training for Africa, but it seldom addresses the gender issue in education, which seems only to appear in the papers from the African Training and Research Centre for Women.

APPENDIX II

Compliance by the Economic Commission for Africa with the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and related follow-up action as of 31 March 1995

1. The main findings and recommendations of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services were accepted by ECA. The follow-up action taken by its Secretariat is presented hereunder:

The need to place more emphasis in the programme of work on the analysis of trade patterns of African countries between themselves and with outside trading blocks and to address the question of lack of trade statistics in African countries

2. During the period from June to October 1994, ECA conducted a survey of international trade statistical operations in 49 African countries in order to identify problems encountered in collecting international trade statistics. The ECA secretariat responded to the findings of the survey by:

(a) Organizing a seminar to highlight international recommendations in the area of foreign trade statistics and to demonstrate software packages for the compilation of trade data;

(b) Preparing technical publications to highlight concepts and definitions and other technical details regarding the compilation of trade statistics;

(c) ECA is also envisaging within the context of its 1996-1997 programme of work to undertake missions to assist African countries in improving the compilation of trade statistics and train statistical and customs staff in the collection, processing and dissemination of trade data. In this regard, ECA has formulated a project which will be funded from extrabudgetary resources to strengthen the capacities of national centres in gathering, processing, dissemination and utilization of trade information, and to develop a computerized trade information system.

The need to improve quality through increased training and greater horizontal communications among divisions

3. Following the review by the Office of Internal Oversight Services a retreat was organized for chiefs of divisions of the ECA secretariat and the directors of the MULPOCs. The retreat was organized by Management Systems International, Inc. It focused on improving quality through better horizontal communications. In this connection, ECA is contemplating the issuance of an in-house professional periodical as proposed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The periodical will be entitled "Distinguished Lecturers Series" and will provide a forum for informal communications on substantive issues among staff members of the secretariat. Furthermore, in an effort to upgrade the professional skills of its substantive staff, external training was provided in 1994 to 11 Professional staff for periods of between 15 days and 2 months. The

trainees came from the Natural Resources, Statistics, Industry and Human Settlements, and Population Divisions.

Establishment of a single oversight mechanism to programme and coordinate all activities of the Commission, irrespective of their source of funding, which would have a direct influence in shaping the programme of work of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres and integrating it into the objectives and work plan of the Commission as a whole

4. ECA reported that the above recommendation is being addressed in two ways: first, through the 1996-1997 programme budget proposal in which the core activities of the MULPOCs are part and parcel of ECA activities under subprogramme 2, Trade, regional economic cooperation and integration; secondly, through the new organizational structure of the Secretariat which will be outlined in an ST/SGB bulletin of the Secretary-General to be issued shortly. The structure reflects an enhanced role for the programme planning and coordination office over the whole programme.

The monitoring of programme implementation should be perceived as a management tool of performance evaluation and not as a mere reporting mechanism

5. ECA reported that it had improved the management and operation of the established tools for programme planning and monitoring. As for the evaluation of performance, ECA reported that it had proposed the evaluation of all of its subprogrammes over the three-year period from 1995 to 1997.

The function of financial authorization for all funds should be centralized in the Division of Administration

6. ECA reported that the above recommendation is being addressed within the context of the proposed restructuring of the secretariat referred to above. Once the new structure is approved, it is intended to redeploy the staff from the Technical Cooperation Office dealing with budgetary matters to the Budget and Finance Section to be centralized in the Division of Administration.

A determined effort needs to be made to upgrade the performance of the administration functions through appropriate training of administrative staff

7. ECA made tangible efforts to address the above recommendation by seconding two staff members from the administration for a short period to work with the central entities at Headquarters and upgrade their skills. Tangible progress was made in upgrading the computer skills of staff. Thus, in 1994, 261 staff members received training on PC packages. Courses were also organized for staff with access to the LAN networking system on the use of E-mail for internal and external transmissions. Furthermore, the training service at Headquarters, in response to the request by ECA, has approved an allocation of US$ 116,000 in May 1994 for additional computer training at ECA. ECA reported that it was in the process of preparing a work plan for the effective use of these resources.

II. REPORT ON THE PROGRAMME AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES OF THE SECRETARIAT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

Submitted by a team of the Office of Inspections and Investigations on 16 November 1993

1. Few United Nations programmes have had to deal with as many external constraints as have affected the work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). A first move in 1982, from provisional headquarters at Beirut to permanent headquarters at Baghdad, was followed in 1990 by the Gulf war, which led to the dismantling of the Baghdad accommodation and to a period, extending for over a year, of what could be termed suspended animation, during which most staff members returned to their country of origin or of preference and waited for the crisis to end. There then followed, in 1991, a further move to the current temporary headquarters in Amman. It is expected that the forthcoming meeting of the Conference of Ministers of ESCWA, to be held in April 1994, will consider, inter alia, the question of a permanent headquarters.

2. It should not be surprising that, in these circumstances, the work programme of ESCWA has suffered. Indeed, even though there have now been almost two years of relative stability, the physical consequences of headquarters dislocation are still apparent, for example, in the containers housing the greater part of ESCWA's library and the larger printing machinery, or in the very fact that the secretariat is dispersed in two separate non-contiguous buildings. More importantly, in the view of the team, the work programme of ESCWA has not yet been put back on stable footing. To be more precise:

(a) There is an absence of a comprehensive strategy permeating the work programme as a whole and linking its elements;

(b) As a consequence, divisional work programmes are not supportive of each other, and resources are spread thinly;

(c) No system of priority setting is apparent;

(d) In the above circumstances, it is difficult to gauge the real relevance of many outputs;

(e) There is evidence of misuse of resources, in that too many resources (particularly work-months) are often used in comparison to the actual output produced;

(f) The quality of outputs is irregular.

3. The programme oversight mechanism, entrusted in terms of the Organization Manual to the Programme Planning and Coordination Division, includes provision of assistance in the formulation of work programmes and budgets, design of procedures for monitoring the implementation of the work programme and assistance in reviewing progress made. However, based on its interviews and analysis, the team has some doubts about the effective discharge of these

responsibilities. At the programming level, the activities in the work programme do not appear to lead to well-defined objectives or to conclusive results. It is also unclear how the needs for such activities, activities incidentally often consisting of previously published material, have been identified, or their relevancy ascertained in regard to the objectives of the medium-term plan.

4. By and large, the programme of work as a whole appears to lack direction and focus. Activities proposed by each division do not seem to be coordinated into a comprehensive programme structure. The problem is compounded by ineffective oversight at the intergovernmental level; there is only one intergovernmental body for programme review and oversight, namely the Technical Committee, but the Committee's recommendations become binding only after they are endorsed by the ESCWA Conference of Ministers. The Conference and the Committee meet once in alternate years, in such a manner that the Committee meets while the programme budget is being prepared, while the Conference meets after the programme budget has been approved by the General Assembly. This matter needs to be reviewed in terms of the adequacy of intergovernmental oversight over the work programme of ESCWA.

5. As regards performance evaluation, the team was unable to find any system for feed-back and self evaluation. The team reviewed a large part of the outputs implemented since January 1992, and was unable to escape the impression that the results obtained were often disproportionate to the resources utilized, and that in some cases outputs suffered from a lack of professional peer review.

6. All in all, therefore, there is no doubt, in the view of the team, that the situation in ESCWA is serious and should not be allowed to continue. It is serious because there is no assurance that resources appropriated by the General Assembly are being used effectively and efficiently, and serious also because there is no doubt that ESCWA can produce work of real relevance to the region, and recent political events in the region make it even more necessary for ESCWA to be at the forefront of development efforts.

7. ESCWA has the motivation, is gifted with good staff and is at a crossroads in its history. The team is of the opinion that in the circumstances described above, a fundamental review of the work programme of ESCWA can and should take place, led by ESCWA itself and with the participation of external expertise. More specifically, the team recommends that a restructuring of the work programme of ESCWA take place over the five-month period from November 1993 to April 1994 comprising the following three stages:

(a) A grass-roots discussion at the secretariat level, with a designated team leader chosen from among the ESCWA staff and with the participation of all interested ESCWA staff, one or two staff members from Headquarters, one or two staff members from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a World Bank resource person, a first-class outside consultant and a number of selected experts from within the region. All participants would be acting in a personal capacity, not as representatives of their organization or country. The objective of this phase, which could take place over a three-week period in November/December 1993, would be to develop a new, coherent work programme for ESCWA for 1994/1995, structured along a small number of clearly identified

themes - preferably those in which measurable progress can now be made or is in fact taking place;

(b) The results of this exercise would be reviewed by a senior ESCWA review group, with the participation of one or two staff members from the Headquarters economic and social area; this could take place in January 1994;

(c) After formal Headquarters clearance (if required), the resulting final proposal will be circulated to the member States of ESCWA in February 1994 for discussion and, if they consider it appropriate, approval at the ministerial meeting of ESCWA scheduled for April 1994.

8. A new and better focused work programme of ESCWA will inevitably lead to a reorganization of the secretariat along the programmatic lines decided upon. Although it is tempting to tinker with boxes, the team has resisted this temptation, since it would put the cart before the horse. Any reorganization will need to be developed and decided upon by ESCWA itself once a revised work programme emerges and is approved; it should certainly lead towards consolidation and simplification of the existing structure, rather than towards further fragmentation. There is, however, one important related point to which the team wishes to draw attention. The fact that a new work programme is recommended, to be accompanied by a reorganization of the ESCWA secretariat, carries in our view a consequential third recommendation, which is that the current staffing of ESCWA be frozen, that is, no outside recruitment or vertical or lateral movements, until and unless the reorganization takes place. This is based on the premise that the actual skills profile for current vacant posts cannot really be determined until it is known for what purpose those posts are to be used.

9. The above recommendations are of an admittedly fundamental nature. They are designed to place ESCWA once again in the forefront of the economic and social development efforts for the region. They will require much hard work and candid introspection by ESCWA staff, as well as the whole-hearted support of Headquarters. Compared to them, all other matters reviewed by the team are of considerably less importance; nevertheless, the team wishes to place on record its views on another matter of a personnel nature.

10. The team noted that ESCWA had initiated a process of staff replacement, which, as an initial step, resulted in the separation, or proposed separation, of a number of staff through non-extension of their appointments. The team is of the opinion that indeed a searching inquiry should be made into the qualifications and the quality of work of existing ESCWA staff. This opinion is buttressed by the remarks made earlier regarding the uneven quality of outputs and the disparity which, on occasion, exists between the outputs delivered and the resources used to deliver them (see paras. 2 (e) and (f) above). However, the non-extension of the appointments referred to did not appear to respond to any defined project of quality improvement, or indeed to any other discernible pattern. In the team's opinion, any such programme of quality improvement should be based on the team's earlier recommendation concerning a restructuring of the work programme. It is only after this restructuring is decided upon that the proper mix of qualifications can be ascertained and quality targets established against which the performance of staff can more objectively be

gauged. At that time, indeed this performance should be measured in an exacting but equitable manner, and consequential personnel actions - including, if necessary, separation of staff - will be based on solid grounds. No such solid grounds, however, appear to exist at present.

11. In summary therefore, the team recommends that a fundamental reappraisal and restructuring of the work programme of ESCWA take place forthwith (para. 7 above) to be followed by a consequential reorganization of the secretariat (para. 8), and that, in the meantime, a freeze be imposed on personnel appointments and movements (ibid.). The team also considers that, in general, it is difficult at present to find solid enough grounds upon which to base the non-extension of appointments (para. 10).

12. In the course of its review, the team obtained facts and analysed a number of other matters, particularly in the field of personnel and finance. However, the conclusions reached on these matters are not, in the opinion of the team, of an importance that would merit mention in this report.

APPENDIX I

Observations on specific substantive divisions of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

I. SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

1. This Division shoulders the responsibility of coordinating an overall development strategy for the region because its focus is on macro socio-economic issues. Of all the reports produced by the Commission, those that are produced in this Division are the most widely circulated outside the Commission. For this reason, the perception of the quality of the work at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is largely based upon what this Division produces and in particular upon the Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region. The team is of the view that recent publications of this document are more comprehensive, more analytical and generally better written than the issues of the 1980s. However, while this progress should be applauded, the team felt that there is still room for further improvement. One recommendation is to try to bring all chapters of the Survey to the same level of quality. Some chapters were outstanding, especially the sectoral chapters such as agriculture and finance, but the macroeconomic overview could use some deeper analysis. One way that this might be accomplished is to go beyond presenting growth rates and to add some more economically relevant statistics to the tables, such as marginal propensities, income elasticities and their trends. There should be more analysis of the factor inputs as well as the outputs by major producing sector. This is especially important for this region, where the factors (especially labour) are capable of mass movements. The emphasis of the Survey should be more on economics and less on politics.

2. In the past, this Division tried to build a capacity to simulate development strategy through the use of econometric models. For one reason or another, these activities never materialized, whereas other regional commissions (the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)) have had much more success with them. The team suggests that the Division resume this activity since economic forecasts and projections are very useful for both the Survey and for testing the assumptions of a regional development strategy.

II. AGRICULTURE DIVISION

3. The team was impressed with the quality of the analysis done by this Division. However, it would suggest that the Division try to integrate its research in agriculture with work in the other divisions. For example, studies in water resources should be linked to studies in agriculture. Since, agriculture is one component of GDP, strategy developments in agriculture should be part of the overall development strategy coordinated by the Sustainable Economic Development Division. Since it is in the agriculture sector where the most poverty in the region is found, developments and analyses of the agriculture sector should be an input to the Social Development Division and

vice versa. Likewise, developments in transportation and communications will have an impact on the location and distribution of agricultural output.

III. INDUSTRY DIVISION

4. The other components of GDP, besides agriculture, are researched in the Industry Division. Therefore, it would be desirable for the research in this Division to be integrated with the analysis of the Sustainable Economic Development Division, especially with regard to the macro policies that are relevant to an overall development strategy for the region. Like the Agriculture Division, this Division should provide input into the Social Division and other sectoral divisions and vice versa. Besides its work at the project level, this Division should be researching development issues at macro levels, at least in the major industrial sectors. One useful exercise would be to estimate sectoral production functions for each country in the region which could be used in the econometric modelling exercise of the Sustainable Economic Development Division.

IV. STATISTICS DIVISION

5. The team found that the Statistics Division complements the work of the Statistical Division at Headquarters. That, of course, is positive, however there are a few series that would be useful for the research on a regional development strategy which do not seem to be available. The most important are a breakdown of gross fixed capital formation and labour force by type of economic activity so that production functions may be estimated for these sectors. It would also be very helpful if the Social Division were provided with income distribution shares for deciles (or some other quantiles) of population. These are usually estimated from the summary tables on income distribution found in household sample surveys.

V. OTHER DIVISIONS

6. The suggestions offered to the Agriculture and Industry Divisions are also relevant to the other divisions, that is, all divisions should work in an interdisciplinary mode, sharing analysis and expertise. This unifies the research for a regional development strategy and avoids inconsistencies.

APPENDIX II

Compliance by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia with the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and related follow-up action as of 31 March 1995

1. The main findings and recommendations of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services were accepted by ESCWA. The follow-up action taken by its Secretariat is presented hereunder.

A fundamental review and restructuring of the programme of work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia should take place in order to develop a new coherent programme for 1994-1995, structured along a small number of clearly identified themes; the exercise should be implemented in stages over a five-month period ending in April 1994

2. The management of ESCWA complied with the above recommendation in accordance with the phases and time schedule recommended. The revised programme of work that emanated was subsequently endorsed by the seventeenth session of ESCWA, held at Amman in May 1994. Furthermore, the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 was revised along thematic lines to enable the development of a better focused programme of work. The revised medium-term plan was endorsed by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at the second part of its thirty-fourth session.

The restructuring of the work programme should be followed by the reorganization of the secretariat; this should certainly lead towards consolidation and simplification of the existing structure rather than towards further fragmentation

3. A new organizational structure of the secretariat of ESCWA was finalized and issued in ST/SGB/Organization, section: ESCWA/Rev.1, dated 6 October 1994. The new structure consolidates the resources of the secretariat by reducing the number of divisions from nine to seven. It also addresses the concern expressed in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services relating to the quality and relevance of the outputs produced by bringing the programme oversight function under the direct responsibility and supervision of the Deputy Executive Secretary.

The staffing table of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia should be frozen, that is, no outside recruitment to fill vacancies or vertical or lateral movements until and unless the reorganization takes place

4. The Department of Administration and Management at Headquarters enforced the above recommendation and monitored the compliance by ESCWA with it. The freeze was discontinued upon the completion of the restructuring and the determination of the skill profile needed to fill the vacant posts.

III. REPORT ON THE PROGRAMME AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES OF THE SECRETARIAT OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Submitted by a team of the Office for Internal Oversight Services on 7 October 1994

A. Substance

1. All international organizations dealing with European matters feel the impact of events which are transforming the political, economic and social order in Europe, and none more so than the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). Thus, the membership of ECE rose from 34 to 54 countries in the span of three years, posing new challenges and changing the very nature of the Commission. Almost half of the member States are now countries in transition, some of them clearly at the early stage of developing countries, making the difficult transition from centrally planned to market economies.

2. In response to the above challenges, the Commission gave high priority to five aspects of the work of ECE, namely, the protection of the environment, transport, statistics, economic analysis and trade facilitation. The Commission also underscored the importance of activities which would assist countries of Central and Eastern Europe to make the transition from centrally planned to market economies.

3. If ECE is to make a meaningful contribution to the transformation processes of the transition economies, it will have to devote more resources to the monitoring of the situation of these countries (including information and data collection and processing) and to research and analysis of the problems of system-wide socio-economic transition in an uncertain political environment, which are, on the whole, uncharted waters.

4. Several factors are helping ECE to meet the challenges. The first is a wealth of experience in the study and analysis of national economies and in the promotion of cooperation among all countries of the region. ECE has also accumulated expertise in drawing up international conventions, particulary in the fields of environmental protection and transport.

5. At the moment, a substantial number of ECE members are in a state of severe crisis, and thus in dire need of sound economic analysis. There is a need for continuous monitoring and rethinking as experience is gained. Without this, it would be impossible to formulate rational economic policies, let alone pursue a properly streamlined transformation process.

6. In our view, the activities in the five priority areas for the transition countries will have to be addressed more in terms of the above and less in terms of norms, standards and regulations. The latter are also important for the transition countries; indeed, if they are to become integrated with Western Europe, in particular, the new ECE members will certainly have to take steps to render their own norms, standards and regulations compatible with those of the European Union. They will also have to be able to contribute to the negotiations and agreements of refinements thereof. The activities in the

priority areas must however include a significant level of technical cooperation activities in forms that can be absorbed with maximum benefit given the state of play with the transformation agenda.

7. The research undertaken in the ECE secretariat is a highly respected independent assessment of the trends in all European economies, and those on the transition countries in the Eastern part of Europe have been exemplary. Most of this work is done in the Division of Economic Analysis and Projections. In this regard, the team noted that the resources available to this Division are so meagre that the Division is no longer capable of preparing its own economic projections. Instead, staff base their prognoses on a synthesis of the forecasting and projections undertaken by other institutions. As another example, the Division is now so pressed for resources that its highly regarded painstaking culling of socio-economic information about the countries in the eastern part of Europe from official and other sources and organization of it into a coherent whole is being curtailed far beyond what would seem warranted by the circumstances in which the transition economies find themselves. This is a source of quantitative and qualitative information that is reasonably comparable, at least for key macroeconomic aggregates, to what is available for other ECE economies and immensely valuable to researchers working on the transition economies of Eastern Europe.

8. The team also noted that two important ECE publications which are highly dependent on the Division for their preparation, namely the Economic Survey of Europe and the Economic Bulletin for Europe, have so few professional staff involved in writing the main text that if one of them were to become unavailable to the Organization for any length of time, the next edition, let alone its timeliness, would be in serious jeopardy. The Survey provides an independent voice on East-West economic issues whereas the Bulletin is a source of scarce information on Eastern European and East-West trade.

9. In many aspects, the work of ECE appears to respond to the needs of the countries in the region. This is evidenced by the ever-present involvement of member States in its work and the pressure from the delegations for new initiatives. ECE has also distinguished itself as a facilitator of interchanges between Western and Eastern European countries. In this connection, the team noted that a substantial part of the resources of the ECE secretariat is primarily engaged in the substantive servicing of meetings. Aside from the Commission meetings, 10 principal subsidiary bodies are serviced every year, along with more than 40 standing working parties and 100 ad hoc working groups and expert groups at the intergovernmental level. A total of approximately 200 meetings are sponsored by ECE each year in addition to the numerous seminars and workshops that are held in member countries as part of the technical cooperation activities to assist countries in transition in addressing specific problems.

10. In our opinion, it is important from a resource point of view to strike a balance between research and servicing of intergovernmental mechanisms and working groups. There exists indeed the danger that the pressure to service more intergovernmental mechanisms will lay claim to a large proportion of the Commission's resources at the expense of the quantity and quality of economic research and analysis. If this were to happen, ECE research and analysis activities would gravitate to other regional organizations whose mandates are

not necessarily as broad and neutral as that of ECE. In any case, ECE would lose whatever advantages (both absolute and comparative) it has built up in these areas over the years.

11. The team also noted the growing demand on ECE to provide technical cooperation activities. This is, of course, an important development, especially as it pertains to the transition economies. However, to honour this commitment, it will require solid substantive backstopping. This can only be accomplished to a satisfactory degree provided the relevant unit of ECE - the Division of Economic Analysis and Projections - is enabled to maintain a strong research and policy analysis capability, possibly in conjunction with a much stronger role for the regional adviser, and to build further upon these strengths.

12. In this connection, the team wishes to point out that because of the existence of well-equipped regional and international organizations engaged in promoting the process of economic reform in the economies in transition, it would be advisable for ECE to confine the provision of technical cooperation activities to limited priorities which complement its regular programme of work. ECE has a comparative advantage in undertaking activities such as training, workshops, seminars and advisory services on specific issues. It loses that advantage if it involves itself in the execution of field projects of sizeable dimensions in an area which requires substantial funding and a much larger backstopping.

B. Programme oversight

13. The existing mechanisms for programme oversight at the level of programme formulation, implementation and coordination show signs of undue dispersal. There are three different centres of responsibility for programme oversight within ECE, all of them are attached to the Office of the Executive Secretary. Thus, the Deputy Executive Secretary coordinates ECE work on the social aspects of the mandated programme of work and supervises ECE operational activities, which are mainly in support of the substantive core programme of ECE. The Senior Adviser coordinates ECE activities of an interdisciplinary nature, whereas the preparation of the programme budget, the medium-term plan and related performance reports fall within the responsibilities of the Special Assistant and Secretary of the Commission. All aspects of the administration of ECE, including personnel and financial control, are also the responsibility of the Special Assistant and Secretary of the Commission. Granted that close cooperation may exist between these three responsibility centres, the fact nevertheless remains that there is no one single point to programme, coordinate, monitor implementation and assess results of the whole ECE programme in a coherent way. We believe that such a situation is an impediment to correct resource determination and renders difficult the development of clear policies for the allocation of resources to address priorities. In the interest of effective programme management and control, a single programme oversight mechanism should be established.

14. A related observation concerns programme monitoring and assessment of the results achieved. There is no indication that the monitoring of programme

implementation is being conducted or perceived as a management tool. The exercise is discharged by the small Administrative Unit and is conceived as a mere reporting mechanism of a somewhat mechanical nature to contribute to the biennial report of the Secretary-General on programme performance. In this connection, the team reviewed a large part of the activities reported implemented during the biennium 1992-1993 and could not escape the impression that the reporting provides a misleading picture in terms of what the secretariat staff has actually implemented during the period under consideration in comparison to what was programmed. The true situation is blurred by the large number of activities added to the programme and executed by governmental experts of the various subsidiary bodies, committees and working parties. It is not evident that the programme implementation adequately reflects the priorities assigned to the subprogrammes in the medium-term plan.

15. The team is of the opinion that monitoring of programme implementation should be integrated within a single oversight mechanism referred to above which oversees and coordinates all ECE programmes. The team is also of the opinion that it is necessary to move progressively from reporting implementation to performance evaluation by accelerating efforts to provide a continuous flow of information on results achieved, difficulties encountered and remedies proposed. At the time of the review, the team could not find an indication of evaluation work being conducted in the secretariat.

16. One final issue of programme oversight which the team wishes to address relates to the substantial changes introduced to the biennial programme of work during its implementation by the various committees and working parties. These changes were translated into a large number of activities added to the programme of work, while activities originally programmed were terminated. The situation could be indicative of a healthy intergovernmental process; however, it is worrisome to note that the committees and working parties that introduced all these changes and practically reshaped the programme of work are neither involved in setting the priorities of the medium-term plan nor in the formulation of the biennial programme budget. In a sense, they are not bound by either of them. The team believes that the secretariat should address this anomaly, which renders the programme planning process a perfunctory one.

17. Under these circumstances, one is left with the impression that there are two programmes of work that run parallel to each other. The first is mandated by the General Assembly and reflected in the programme budget. The second is a demand-driven programme initiated by the various committees and working parties throughout the biennium. It should be noted that Governments contribute substantially towards the implementation of the "second" programme. They host workshops and study tours and provide experts to engage in research and prepare reports. The contribution of the secretariat of ECE in terms of substance and resources towards this programme remains unclear and will continue to be so, as long as the demand-driven activities remain outside the scope of the programme planning process and the system of priority setting.

18. In our view, the above situation is serious because it means that there is no framework that regulates the ever-increasing demands emanating from committees, working parties and expert groups. As such, more and more resources would have to be devoted to meet these demands at the expense of other

priorities and the whole programme of work could lose its focus. In this connection, the team could not escape the conclusion that this could be the reason for the low implementation rate in the designated high priority subprogrammes during the 1992-1993 biennium.

C. Issues of administration

19. The administrative affairs of the ECE secretariat are entrusted to the Administrative Unit. As of January 1994, the staffing of the Unit consisted of one P-4 and two P-2 officers assisted by six General Service staff. Aside from personnel, administration and conference-servicing, which is undertaken in coordination with the United Nations Office at Geneva, the Unit takes care of all acquisition of furniture and equipment and other supplies, as well as the management of office space, archives and records. In addition, the Unit prepares the biennial programme budget and performance reports, monitors the programme of work and manages technical cooperation activities, including mobilization and administration of extrabudgetary resources. In our view, the combination of administrative and programmatic tasks under one umbrella means that the purpose for which these tasks have been established in the first place cannot adequately be fulfilled, not to mention the fact that these tasks require quite diverse skill profiles. It is therefore necessary to redeploy clearly programmatic and managerial functions to the single programme coordinating oversight mechanism referred to earlier.

20. The team noted with satisfaction that the system of financial control is adequate. However, there is need for more transparency in terms of sharing with programme managers information relating to the status of the resources and expenditures under the subprogrammes and projects falling within their respective responsibilities. The team believes that the provision of financial information to all programme managers and project officers on a periodic basis and in the detail needed is essential for programme management purposes.

21. The team believes that the administrative responsibilities delegated to the ECE secretariat in personnel and budgetary matters should be similar to those delegated to administrative units in other regional commissions. This is particularly needed to enhance the executive capacity of ECE's top management at a time when the secretariat is widening the scope of its programme of work and increasing its involvement in administering technical cooperation activities and advisory services. In our opinion, this is an important step towards the establishment of a clearer system of accountability.

D. Conclusions and recommendations

22. The team is of the opinion that much useful work has been done at ECE, and that over the years, the secretariat has accumulated substantial experience in terms of insight into European economies and knowledge of their needs. The main question now is, how could ECE be most effective in addressing the needs of a new Europe in a rapidly evolving situation? Within this framework, our principal observations and recommendations are as follows:

(a) We believe that more emphasis should be given to research and analysis of the problems of socio-economic transition in Eastern Europe. Accordingly, we recommend that the research capability of the secretariat in terms of global policy analysis and intersectoral studies should be strengthened. This should be reflected in the resource allocation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 (see paras. 3-10). We also believe that the technical cooperation activities should complement the regular programme of work and its priorities (paras. 11 and 12);

(b) As indicated in paragraphs 13 and 14 above, the current arrangements for programme coordination and oversight are dispersed. This is an impediment to adequate resource determination, especially at a time when coordination with other international and regional institutions is expected to be intensified, and ECE is becoming a greater provider of technical assistance in support of its substantive work. We recommend, therefore, that there should be a single oversight mechanism to programme and coordinate all ECE activities, irrespective of their source of funding. This oversight function could be entrusted either to the Deputy Executive Secretary or to the Senior Adviser, who, by virtue of their responsibilities, deal exclusively with programmatic matters. As a consequence, the role and functions of the Senior Officers in the Office of the Executive Secretary should be redefined and their respective programme oversight functions integrated within the single overall mechanism of coordination and oversight referred to above. This would also entail some redeployment of resources from the administrative programme support area to the oversight mechanism. It is recommended that such adjustment be reflected in the proposal for the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997;

(c) The monitoring of programme implementation should be perceived as a management tool of performance evaluation, and not as a mere reporting mechanism. It is thus necessary to develop indicators for assessing performance and to provide upper management with a continuous flow of information on problems encountered and results achieved (see para. 15);

(d) It is recommended that the ever-increasing initiatives emanating from the various committees, working parties and expert groups be reconciled with the priorities and objectives of the medium-term plan and the programme budget itself. This could be done by involving those committees and working parties in the programme planning and budgetary process itself, so that their work can be conducted within the framework of the objectives and priorities set and the resources available. It is also recommended that the Commission be seized, on a regular basis, with the departures introduced to the programme of work during the biennium and their full implications for the mandated activities and established priorities (see paras. 16-18);

(e) The Administrative Unit should be transformed into a full-fledged Executive Office. The Unit should be headed at an appropriate level commensurate with its responsibilities. It should report directly to the Executive Secretary and work in close cooperation with the central programme oversight mechanism on all matters of direct relevance to the programme of work (see paras. 19-21);

(f) In order to assist programme managers in planning and executing their work better, the introduction of a greater transparency and a more informative approach is recommended in all matters relating to availability of resources and their redeployment between the programmes. A related observation concerns horizontal communications. Division Directors convene in periodic meetings, but otherwise little horizontal communications appear to exist among ECE professional staff. This situation should be remedied in order to encourage intersectoral and interdisciplinary activities.

APPENDIX

Compliance by the Economic Commission for Europe with the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and related follow-up action as of 31 March 1995

1. The main findings and recommendations of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services were accepted by ECE. The follow-up action taken by its Secretariat is presented hereunder:

The research capability for global policy analysis and intersectoral studies should be strengthened in ECE to make a meaningful contribution to the transformation processes of the transition economies; this should be reflected in the resource allocation of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997. Technical cooperation activities should complement the priorities of the programme of work

2. In the 1996-1997 programme budget proposals, ECE sought to provide a sounder resource base for its work in the field of economic analysis. This is to be achieved through the establishment of a new P-5 post and the internal redeployment of a second P-5 post. Both posts are being proposed to strengthen subprogramme 5, Economic analysis. Furthermore, ECE management ascertained that the programme of technical cooperation is, in fact, an extrapolation of its regular programme of economic analysis and is designed to assist countries in transition to a market economy.

A single oversight mechanism should programme and coordinate all ECE activities, irrespective of their sources of funding

3. In response to the above recommendation, ECE reported that the functions of the officials under executive direction and management would be slightly readjusted to avoid overlapping with the functions of the Senior Adviser, who is responsible for central oversight and coordination at ECE. Furthermore, ECE reported that in order to enhance the oversight mechanism, it envisaged providing it with one P-3 and one General Service posts within the context of the 1996-1997 programme budget proposal.

The monitoring of programme implementation is a management tool to assess performance and provide information on problems encountered and results achieved

4. ECE indicated that the additional P-3 post under the oversight mechanism would assist the Senior Adviser in conducting programme evaluation. In this regard, ECE management recognized that while this would not solve the problem overnight, it signals a new determination to reinforce programme oversight.

Initiatives from the various committees, working parties and expert groups should be addressed within the framework of the objectives of the medium-term plan, programme priorities and available resources

5. ECE indicated that efforts would be made to ensure that the various committees and working parties grasp the limits of available resources. However, ECE did not spell out what kind of action will be taken to this effect.

The Administrative Unit should be transformed into a full fledged Executive Office

6. ECE programme budget proposals for the biennium 1996-1997 included a request to upgrade the Administrative Unit to the level of an Executive Office.

It is necessary to introduce greater transparency and information in matters of resources at the disposal of programme managers and to improve horizontal communications among them

7. ECE management reported that the restructured Executive Office would be in a better position to provide regular information on resources available to programme managers. Furthermore, improved communications flowing horizontally between divisions would be attended to by the Senior Adviser.